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ABSTRACT

This digest discusses the current educational status of Latino students, using data from "Latinos in Education," a report by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. Latino preschoolers are less likely to be enrolled in early childhood education programs than other preschoolers. Latino preschooler enrollment increases with increased parental educational attainment. Enrollment of Latinos in elementary schools increased 157 percent between 1978-98. Nearly half of Latinos attend urban schools. About four percent of public school teachers are Hispanic. Over one-third of Latinos age 15-17 years are enrolled below grade level. Achievement scores for Hispanic high school students are well below those of their White peers. Latino students are frequently tracked into general courses that satisfy only basic requirements. The percentage of Latino high school seniors planning to attend four-year colleges doubled from 1972-92. High school completion rates for Latinos are significantly lower, and dropout rates are higher, than for whites or African Americans. Latinos represent nearly 10 percent of total student enrollment in higher education. They have doubled their undergraduate degree attainment since 1976 and also have increased their graduate education enrollment. Latinos borrow less money than other groups to pay for college. (SM)

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON URBAN EDUCATION

DIGEST

Number 162, February 2001 EDO-UD-01-1 ISSN 0889 8049

LATINOS IN SCHOOL: SOME FACTS AND FINDINGS

The number of Latino children and youth in public schools in the U.S. is steadily increasing. Currently, one third of the Latino population is under age 18. Latino students comprise 15 percent of K-12 students overall, a proportion projected to increase to 25 percent by 2025. Although Latinos have high aspirations, their educational attainment is consistently lower than that of other students. Latino student achievement is compromised by a variety of factors, including poverty, lack of participation in preschool programs, attendance at poor quality elementary and high schools, and limited English proficiency.

In order to help education policy and decision makers better respond to the strengths and challenges of the growing Latino school population, this digest presents key information about the current educational status of Latino students. One of an ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education series consisting of facts about specific student groups, the digest is based on *Latinos in Education*, a report by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. The report, fully cited at the end of the digest, contains additional statistics as well as sources for the information.

Latinos in Preschool

- Latinos under age 5 are less likely to be enrolled in early childhood education programs than other groups: 20 percent, as compared with 44 percent of African Americans and 42 percent of whites. Urban and suburban rates for Latinos are nearly the same.
- The enrollment of Latino children in preschool increases with increases in parent educational attainment. Fewer Hispanics age 25 or older complete high school than do African Americans and whites, however. Enrollment also increases along with increases in family income. But here, too, Latinos, with a median family income of $28,000, lag behind the $39,000 median income of the population at large.
- While 36 percent of Latino children live in poverty, only 26 percent attend Head Start programs, which are designed to remedy the effects of poverty on educational achievement.
- Although children three to five years old may start school better prepared to learn if they are read to, only 65 percent of Latino children are read to, compared to 75 percent of African Americans and 90 percent of whites.
- Seventy percent of preschool teachers assert that they are not fully prepared to meet the needs of students with limited English proficiency or from diverse cultural backgrounds. Such lack of preparation can seriously impede the quality of Latino children's preschool education.

Latinos in Elementary School

Enrollment

- The enrollment of Latinos in elementary schools increased 157 percent between 1976 and 1998. Latinos comprise 15 percent of the elementary school-age population.
- Nearly 50 percent of Latinos attend urban schools. They comprise one-quarter of the student population in central city schools.
- Latino students attend schools with more than twice as many poor classmates as those attended by white students: 46 percent compared with 19 percent.

Educational Achievement

- Disparities between Latino students and others begin as early as kindergarten and remain through age 17. Latinos perform below their non-Hispanic peers in reading, mathematics, and science proficiency by age 9. Overall, they consistently perform below the national average in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- Latinos comprise three-quarters of all students enrolled in Limited English Proficient (LEP) programs, although not all Latino students have limited English proficiency.
- Fewer Latinos than other students have access to a computer at home or school, despite the fact that computers are an essential tool: 68 percent use a computer at school (compared with 70 percent of African Americans and 84 percent of whites), and only 18 percent use one at home (compared with 19 percent of African Americans and 52 percent of whites).

Teachers

- Only about 4 percent of public school teachers are Latinos, whereas Latinos constitute 15 percent of the student body.

Latinos in Secondary School

Enrollment

- Latinos in grades 9-12 constitute 13 percent of the school population. By 2030, they are expected to comprise 23 percent of the population.
- More than one-third of Latinos age 15 to 17 are enrolled below grade level, an unfortunately large number given the fact that enrollment below grade level is the highest predictor of dropping out.

Educational Achievement

- The average 1996 NAEP scores for Hispanic students age 17 were well below those of their white peers in reading, mathematics, and science.

- Latino students earn more credits in computer science, foreign languages, and English than other groups; and fewer credits than other groups in history, science, and mathematics.

College Preparation

- The percentage of Latino seniors planning to attend a four-year college doubled from 24 percent in 1972 to 50 percent in 1992. The percentage intending to attend a two-year program increased from 12 to 20 percent.

- Latino students are at least three times as likely to take a foreign language Advanced Placement (AP) examination as whites, and five times as likely as whites to be eligible for college credit from these tests. (White students are, though, more likely than either Latinos or African Americans to take AP examinations in all other subject areas.)

- Only 35 percent of Latino students are enrolled in college preparatory or academic programs that provide access to four-year colleges or rigorous technical schools, as compared with 43 percent of African Americans and 50 percent of whites.

- Moreover, Latino students are more frequently tracked into general courses that satisfy only the basic requirements: 50 percent are enrolled in general programs, as compared with 40 percent of African Americans and 39 percent of whites.

Educational Attainment

- The high school completion rate for Latinos has remained steady over several years: only 63 percent, as compared with 81 percent for African Americans and 90 percent for whites.

- The dropout rate for Latinos is much higher than for other groups: in 1998, 30 percent of all Latino 16- through 24-years-old (1.5 million) were dropouts, whereas the dropout rate was 14 percent for African Americans and 8 percent for whites.

- The high Latino dropout rate is partly attributable to the relatively greater dropout rate for Hispanic immigrants: 44 percent, as compared with 21 percent for the U.S.-born.

- The high school completion rate for Latino parents is increasing, but remains low. Up from 23 percent in 1972 to 45 percent in 1997, the completion rate for Latino parents still lags well below the rate for whites (90 percent), however. (Parental high school completion is an important factor in the educational attainment of their children.)

Latinos in College

Undergraduate Enrollment

- Latinos now represent almost 10 percent of the total student enrollment in higher education. They comprise 14.5 percent of the traditional college-age population in the U.S., a proportion expected to rise to 22 percent by 2025.

- The representation of Latinos in higher education has grown dramatically, increasing 202 percent between 1976 and 1996.

- Latinos enroll in college immediately upon high school graduation at a rate similar to that of other groups: 66 percent, compared with 60 percent for African Americans and 68 percent for whites. The enrollment rate for Latino high school completers age 18-24 over time is lower than that for other groups: 36 percent, compared with 40 percent for African Americans and 46 percent for whites.

- The majority of Latino undergraduates (53 percent) are enrolled in two-year colleges, whereas the majority of African American (51 percent) and white (56 percent) undergraduates are enrolled in four-year colleges.

- A higher percentage of Latino students (45 percent) are enrolled part time than either African Americans (40 percent) or whites (39 percent). Latinos (35 percent) are also more likely than African Americans (32 percent) or whites (25 percent) to take more than six years to earn a bachelor's degree.

- Latino enrollment in undergraduate education is concentrated in the fewer than 200 colleges known as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). HSIs are accredited degree-granting public or private non-profit higher education institutions with at least 25 percent total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment.

Undergraduate Educational Attainment

- Latinos have doubled their undergraduate degree attainment since 1976. Twenty years later, Latino students earned 5 percent of all bachelor's degrees and 7 percent of all associate's degrees.

- The top three disciplines for the bachelor's degrees of Latinos are business, social sciences, and education. The top disciplines for associate's degrees are liberal arts, business, and the health professions.

Graduate Enrollment

- Latinos have increased their enrollment in graduate education, although they still comprise a smaller proportion of students than other groups: 4 percent, as compared with 6 percent for African Americans and 73 percent for whites.

- Within the Latino graduate student group, 60 percent were women in 1996.

Financial Aid

- Latinos borrow less than other groups to pay for their education. Nearly 50 percent of first-year college students received grants and fewer than 30 percent received loans. In comparison, close to 60 percent of African Americans got grants and 42 percent got loans, and 46 percent of whites got grants and 31 percent got loans.

Faculty

- In 1992 Latinos comprised fewer than 3 percent of full-time instructional faculty and staff in higher education.

Source

Latinos in education: Early childhood, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, graduate. (1999). Washington, DC: The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. (ED 440 817)

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